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A national study of university level reading instruction

Dear Legislator,

We are a statewide coalition of parents, teachers, professionals and scientists concerned about children's reading scores in Connecticut. Only 40% of fourth graders scored at grade level in Connecticut, and Connecticut's fourth grade achievement gap is one of the largest nationwide.

Attached is a study from the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), evaluating the effectiveness of reading instruction syllabi in colleges of education across the country. Evaluation criteria included the five essential components of reading instruction identified by the National Reading Council and the *Connecticut Blueprint for Reading*, - phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. In our state, the University of Connecticut taught just one component, for a failing score of 20% and Connecticut College taught none, for a failing score of 0% (Table page 6).

In the world of science-based reading instruction, Connecticut is a pioneer. We have the Connecticut Longitudinal Study, the Shaywitz's dyslexia studies and the Haskins Laboratories. The Connecticut Legislature has an admirable record of supporting reading improvement, starting with the *Connecticut Blueprint for Reading* in 2000. Nevertheless, reading proficiency scores in Connecticut have been stuck for many years with only 40% of students at grade level. We feel that the root of the problem lies in the ineffective reading instruction methods taught in university and college schools of education. Unless universities and colleges change the way they teach reading instruction, the only way to train elementary teachers to teach reading effectively is to pour millions of dollars into retraining them in reading methods that do improve test scores. Teaching reading is truly a science. We must ensure that our teachers receive pre-service training in scientifically based instructional methods aligned with the National Reading Panel's five essential components of effective reading instruction.

We hope the Legislature will find some way to address reading instruction in order to close the achievement gap. A well-educated population is an investment in our infrastructure, enabling our people to become competent citizens and global competitors.

Connecticut Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities,
www.cacld.org

Connecticut Branch, International Dyslexia Association, www.connbida.org

Learning Disabilities Association of Connecticut, www.ldact.org

NorwalkSEEKS, www.norwalkseeks.org

Smart Kids with Learning Disabilities, www.SmartKidswithLD.org

The Imperative for Connecticut's Reading Crisis: What We Know and What We Need

Many children and adults can't read and struggle when they try. Illiteracy can limit their personal and professional opportunities for success. It may also lead to tragic results. This widespread problem must be recognized and addressed.

We know that:

- students at risk for reading failure can be helped as early as preschool and kindergarten.
- early intervention can enable many children to become skilled readers and be ready to learn.
- both teaching children to read and learning to read can be extremely difficult.
- teachers want to help their students succeed but many don't know how.
- most teachers have not been taught how to teach reading effectively.
- research indicates the best way to teach reading emphasizes both phonics and meaning.
- new elementary grade teachers in CT must pass a test to show they can apply these methods.

We need to:

- **teach all children to read in first grade.**
Those who don't, have only a one in eight chance of catching up.
- **help children to read well by the end of third grade.**
This is critical, yet only 4 out of 10 fourth graders scored at grade level in CT.
- **close the reading gap between disadvantaged students and their peers.**
CT's fourth grade achievement gap is one of the largest nationwide.
- **keep students in school.**
Kids who can't read well are more likely to drop out, be limited to low paying jobs and never reach their full potential.
- **teach illiterate adults to read.**
Empower them to succeed.
- **reduce the prison population.**
Illiteracy is common among both inmates and the unemployed.
- **save tax dollars.**
The 2005-06 average cost per inmate in CT was about \$30,500 a year. The average cost to educate a child in CT that year was less than half as much.

For more information, visit the following websites or call one of these co-sponsoring organizations:

- The Connecticut Branch of the International Dyslexia Association
www.connbida.org 203-865-6163, x 257
- Connecticut Association for Adults and Children with Learning Disabilities
www.caald.org 203-838-5010
- Norwalk Seeks www.norwalkseeks.org
- Learning Disabilities Association of Connecticut
www.ctlda.org 860-560-1711
- Smart Kids with Learning Disabilities